EVALUATION OF

THE AED PEACE SUPPORT PROGRAM (PHASE III)

AND

THE TAF-ICMA TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE

LOCAL GOVERNANCE (TALG) PROGRAM

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The views expressed in this evaluation are the author's alone and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the US government or USAID.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report evaluates USAID Sri Lanka's two principal DG/conflict programs: AED's Peace Support Program and the TAF/ICMA Transparent and Accountable Local Government (or TALG) program. The major findings of this evaluation are as follows.

1. Peace Support Program

In May 2004 USAID Sri Lanka awarded a Cooperative Agreement to AED in the amount of $6,948,866 for Phase III of AED's Peace Support Program. Phase III runs until September 30, 2007. It has supported or continues to support a range of activities intended to bolster the peace process and build larger constituencies for peace. The most important activities supported under this program include:

- Multi-stakeholder dialogue conducted by the "One Text" Initiative and the South Asia Peace Institute (SAPI);
- Bringing international negotiators and other conflict resolution experts to Sri Lanka;
- Creating more than 60 community-based "People's Forums" across the country;
- The development of the Peace Secretariat for Muslims (PSM); and
- Public opinion surveying, production of a teledrama and other media activities.

Major findings:

Design: The attempt at multi-stakeholder dialogue embodied in One Text and SAPI was innovative and ambitious, but perhaps too much so. The AED program may have tried to do too much, with too complex an architecture and inadequate staff. In establishing the People's Forums, AED could have done better advance program design and planning.

Implementation: The implementation of key components of the program (especially SAPI and, to a lesser degree, People's Forums) has been mixed. On the one hand, AED has been flexible and innovative; on the other hand, the program has suffered from problems arising from low capacity, poor management, and personality issues. It also appears AED was somewhat slow to develop an effective team in Colombo. More could have been done to link the People's Forums to OTI's program and the TALG program.

Output/products: There is little of a tangible nature to show from the considerable investment made in One Text and SAPI. But outputs in other areas have been more substantial, including the creation of People's Forums, Info-Share and the PSM, the production of the KAP surveys and a TV teledrama, and underwriting a diploma course on conflict resolution.

Overall impact: It would be unrealistic and unfair to expect the Peace Support Program to be able to overcome the serious problems facing the peace process in Sri Lanka since 2003. The lasting impact of One Text is principally as a precedent and a learning

experience. More immediately, Info-Share is making an ongoing contribution to strengthening the ITC capacity of civil society organizations and the KAP surveys have elevated the quality of surveying in Sri Lanka. It is too early to judge the impact of People's Forums and the PSM.

Sustainability: The experience with One Text will inform future efforts at multi-stakeholder dialogue. Info-Share appears self-sufficient and the KAPS methodology is sustainable. It is unclear if People's Forums, MPS or the BCIS program are sustainable.

2. The Transparent and Accountable Local Governance (TALG) Program

The TALG program is a $9.2 million program, the principal focus of which is to strengthen the budgeting and service delivery capacities of 35 Local Authorities (LAs), most of which are in tsunami affected areas. A second and much smaller component of the program is supporting the legal empowerment of selected vulnerable groups and communities. The program is implemented under a cooperative agreement between USAID and a consortium consisting of the Asia Foundation (TAF), ICMA and EML, a local consulting firm. It began in January 2005 and runs until September 2007. This evaluation focuses principally on the local governance component of the TALG program.

Major findings:

Design: The design of the program sensibly includes a variety of interventions (training and other assistance) intended to improve the quality of LA administration and service delivery and to make budgeting and planning more participatory. A small grants component is also included. The biggest problem with the design is that the relatively short life of the program (about 2 ½ years) does not provide enough time to ensure the institutionalization of best practices or significant progress with policy reform.

Implementation: The training and grant making components of the program appear to have been smoothly implemented. However, the effort to bolster political will for reform has been slow to develop and somewhat limited in its scope. More could have been done to link the TALG program to the OTI program, AED's People's Forums and NDI's political party program.

Output/products: The training provided to LAs has been highly valued, and it appears it is being used to good effect. There has been some replication/dissemination of good practices, especially participatory budgeting and planning processes. But currently there is relatively little to show with regard to building political will for reform.

Overall impact: The overall impact includes improved performance of 35 LAs, more citizen participation in these and other LAs, and the apparent invigoration of some provincial and national officials responsible for local government affairs. It remains to be seen if efforts over the next six months to build political will for reform will have any lasting impact. The considerable potential impact of the program will not be achieved because of its relatively short life.

Sustainability: Absent a Sri Lankan institution with the capacity and resources to continue the program's activities, the prospects for sustaining the program's successes are poor. Some or many of the basic concepts and techniques may "stick" for awhile, but unless they are reinforced, they will wane over time. The probability is low that the program's assessment tool, the Local Authority Development Scale (LADS) and most of the Good Governance Resource Centers (GGRCs) currently being developed under the program are sustainable. It is unclear if the nascent momentum for further local government reforms will continue.

3. Some Lessons for USAID

My review of these two programs yields a number of "lessons" for USAID Sri Lanka. These include:

- It appears there have been times when the US Embassy has not been fully supportive of some of the Peace Support Program's activities. This highlights the importance of ensuring that the Embassy is engaged in and supportive of USAID programs that address the peace process or other politically sensitive issues.

- Two and a half years – the effective life of the TALG program -- is too short a period of time to do significant, lasting institution building and policy reform. Such a short period of time almost guarantees that the successes of a program will be limited and unsustainable. It also runs the risk of generating disappointment and cynicism among the program's beneficiaries.

- It is advisable to avoid creating new, non-organic organizations (such as SAPI). If, as it appears was the case with SAPI, there is no alternative to creating a new organization, then it is essential to ensure that it has top-flight leadership and there is adequate oversight.

- Good training and facilitation are critical for conveying new approaches to governance, politics and conflict mitigation – especially at the grassroots level. If USAID is serious about supporting grassroots participation, the Mission and its partners must be prepared to invest the time and money to produce good trainers and facilitators.

- The apparently limited use of "Groove" software -- and computers more generally -- as a major "connector" in the One Text process is a useful reminder of the importance of making sure that technology is appropriate for the intended users.

- In general, a greater effort could have been made to "bundle" the Mission's DG programs with a view to creating concentrations of programs. There appears to have been only limited interaction between People's Forums and TALG program. There has been only limited interaction between these two programs and NDI's

political party program. There has been some linking of the ARD anti-corruption program and People's Forums and TALG.

- Greater efforts need to be made to ensure that DG and OTI programs are made more complementary and mutually reinforcing. For there to be greater complementarity, it has to be made a higher priority not just by Mission management, but also by the leadership of USAID's implementing partners and their staff in the field.

- Finally, USAID and its partners still have not found a satisfactory set of indicators and other measures to *usefully* track *processes* such as peace processes, legal empowerment, etc. At a minimum, the voluminous quantitative data that is assembled by the AED program should be supplemented with more qualitative analysis.

4. Recommendations for Future Programs

First, I believe USAID Sri Lanka has a responsibility to make a good faith effort to explore ways that it can increase the likelihood that its more successful programs and partners aren't left completely in the lurch when current funding is exhausted.

Second, the TALG program has demonstrated that training and other forms of assistance to Local Authorities can make a difference and that there appears to be willingness on the part of many LAs to making local government processes more participatory. (It is too early to tell if the LAs are becoming significantly more transparent and accountable.) Given the success of the TALG program and the more mixed record of other programs, I encourage the Mission to maintain a programmatic focus on making local governments in strategic parts of the country more effective and participatory.

Third, with regard to addressing the conflict, until there is a renewed commitment to a Track I peace process, I believe the Mission's focus should be on: (a) addressing some of the pernicious by-products of renewed conflict, namely increased inter-group tensions and human rights violations; (b) preserving informed and pluralistic debate regarding solutions to the conflict, and (c) increasing public understanding of models of federalism and devolution.

Fourth, it is not clear to me that the People's Forums have the potential to become a grassroots "people's movement" in support of peace, democracy and development. But at a minimum they do represent a somewhat useful experiment in local civic action. Whatever their potential, the People's Forums need significantly better training and facilitation for them to develop into effective civic bodies (or a movement). And if the People's Forums are going to contribute in a meaningful way to the Mission's larger DG objectives, they must: (a) include an explicit advocacy dimension and not just concern themselves with community-level peace and development projects, and (b) link to Local Authorities and provincial governments.

Finally, if USAID Sri Lanka's goal is to support Muslim unity and involvement in the peace process, then the Mission shouldn't limit its effort to supporting the relatively weak PSM. Instead, the Mission should broaden its approach and look for other promising Muslim groups and organizations. These might include Muslim business leaders, academics and students. The Mission also could explore linking the PSM with savvy Muslim leaders and organizations in other Muslim-minority countries.

I.   INTRODUCTION

This report evaluates USAID Sri Lanka's two principal DG/conflict programs: AED's Peace Support Program and the TAF/ICMA Transparent and Accountable Local Government (or TALG) program. This evaluation has been prepared by the author at the request of USAID Sri Lanka.

This evaluation is based principally on interviews and observations conducted in Sri Lanka December 3-14, 2006 (focusing on the Peace Support Program) and January 8-19, 2007 (focusing on the TALG program). In addition to spending time in Colombo, the author visited Mawanella, Kandy, Ampara district, Moneragala, Nuara Eliya and Lindulu Thalawkele. The author met with more than 90 individuals or groups (a list of meetings is attached.) He also discussed his preliminary findings with AED and TAF while in Sri Lanka.

The author greatly appreciates the time and assistance provided by staff from USAID, AED and TAF, as well as the time and insights provided by the many people interviewed by the author. However, the views contained in this report are the author's alone and do not necessarily represent the views of USAID or the US government.

A. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation examines the two major components of USAID Sri Lanka's DG/Conflict program: Phase III of AED's Peace Support Program, and the TAF/ICMA Transparent and Accountable Local Governance (TALG) program. The goals and components of these two programs are as follows:

1. AED's Peace Support Program

The Peace Support Program has three goals:

> 1) **To "build inclusive capacity for formal peace negotiations."** The program has attempted to do this by supporting capacity building of peace building mechanisms and supporting multi-stakeholder dialogues. The principle activities under this component include:
> - Supporting the "One Text" process (the support for which ended in May 2005);
> - Creating and supporting the South Asia Peace Institute (SAPI);
> - Supporting Info Share to enable it to provide ICT support to One Text and SAPI and to the peace movement more generally;
> - Supporting the development of the Peace Secretariat for Muslims (PSM);
> - Supporting the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies' (BCIS) diploma course on conflict resolution.

2) **To "mobilize constituents for peace."** It has attempted to do this by supporting grassroots mobilization and "engaging strategic sectors." The principal activities under this component include:
- Grants to four national NGOs to implement "People's Forums;"
- Engaging "Strategic Sectors."[1]

3) **To "link constituents and leadership."** It has attempted to do this by supporting the public opinion surveys and media activities. The principle activities under this component include:
- Support to the Centre for Policy Alternatives/Social Indicators (CPA/SI) to conduct two "Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions" surveys (KAPS);
- Support to Young Asia TV (YA TV) for the production and broadcast of *The East is Calling*, an 11-episode teledrama dealing with ethnic relations and the conflict in the wake of the tsunami;[2]
- Support to the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) for journalists training on covering the conflict.[3]

2. Asia Foundation/ICMA Transparent and Accountable Local Governance Program (TALG)

The principal focus of the TALG program is to strengthen the budgeting and service delivery capacities of 35 Local Authorities (LAs) across six provinces, 22 of which are in tsunami-affected areas. The three sub-components of the local governance component are:

1) **Demonstrating models of effective, democratic local governance**;

2) **Replicating and sustaining improvements in effective, democratic local governance**;

3) **Building political will for local governance reform**.

A second and smaller component of the program is supporting the legal empowerment of selected vulnerable groups and communities. This has two sub-components:

1) **Empowering communities to address injustices through the law**;

2) **Strengthening alternative dispute resolution systems** -- which focuses exclusively on supporting the government's Community Mediation Board program.

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[1] For reasons described later in the evaluation, little in the way of programming has developed in this sub-component of the program.

[2] A first teledrama, *Take This Road,* was supported under Phase II of the Peace Support Program.

[3] The author's understanding is that this training was the final phase of activities begun during Phase II of the PSP. For this reason, and because of the need to prioritize, this training program was not examined.

The USAID Mission's priorities and constraints on the Level of Effort provided under my Scope of Work necessitated that I focus more on some sub-components of these two programs than on others. In the case of the Peace Support Program, my primary focus has been on: (i) One Text and SAPI, (ii) the People's Forums and (iii) the Muslim Peace Secretariat. In the case of the TALG program, my principal focus has been on the local government strengthening component.

B. ISSUES ADDRESSED

In conducting this evaluation, I have adopted the following framework for inquiry:

- *Quality of program design*: To what extent was the program design realistic and appropriate? Was there an appropriate balance between strategic focus and flexibility? To what extent were cross cutting themes such as gender, youth and anti-corruption addressed?

- *Quality of implementation*: To what extent was program implementation characterized by timeliness, responsiveness and flexibility? How smooth and effective were relations among USAID (including OTI), the implementing partners and the beneficiaries?

- *The quality and quantity of outputs/products*: Were performance targets met? What was the quality of the assistance provided and the resulting outputs and products? Was the assistance provided valued and used by the beneficiaries?

- *Overall impact:* What lasting impact has the program had? Have there been unanticipated impacts (both positive and negative)?

- *Sustainability:* Is the assistance that has been provided of sufficient quantity, quality and duration to make it probable that the positive impacts will be sustained?

- *Lessons for USAID and implications for future programs:* What programmatic "dos and don'ts" can be learned from these programs. What does the experience of these programs suggest about the design of future programs supporting peace processes and participatory local governance?

C. LIMITING FACTORS

The findings of this evaluation reflect three limiting factors:

First, as already noted, the author had a relatively limited amount of time available to look at the multiple sub-components of the two programs. Depending on how one chooses to categorize program activities, the Peace Support Program has at least eight discrete sub-components; the TALG program has five. Moreover, there are now upwards of 60 People's Forums and the TALG program works with 35 Local Authorities.

Because of time limitations, I was able to observe only one People's Forum meeting – a relatively new Forum (in Mawanella), one People's Forum training session (for FCE-facilitated People's Forums[4]), and I met with only one PSM district office (in Ampara). But I did have the opportunity to visit six Local Authorities[5] and I benefited from the observations of Lynn Carter and Gwen Bevis, who in the course of conducting a DG assessment for the Mission, visited several People's Forums. So some of my observations – particularly regarding (i) the character of People's Forums and (ii) the legal empowerment component of the TALG program -- are necessarily impressionistic and superficial.

Second, it has proved difficult to gain a full and clear understanding of exactly what occurred in the course of the multi-stakeholder dialogue carried out by One Text and SAPI. By its very nature, One Text was a *process* that had as its goals building trust and consensus among the stakeholders rather than producing tangible outcomes. It also required a high degree of confidentiality and secrecy. The picture is further complicated by the creation of SAPI, which served as the "holding company" for One Text. As a result, it is very difficult, based on only several days of interviews, to understand exactly what transpired over the life of One Text and to what effect.[6]

Finally, and more generally, given the absence of a vigorous "Track I" (official level) peace process after mid-2003, it is very difficult to determine in hindsight what were realistic expectations for One Text. And related to this, it also is difficult to determine which of One Text's shortcomings were due to the challenging environment in which it operated and which were due to problems with its structure and management.

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[4] The portion of the training I witnessed, which dealt with monitoring and evaluation and was conducted by a Sri Lankan "expert" on the topic, was very poorly done and may have done more damage than good. As bad as it was, I recognize that it would be a mistake to generalize from this one training.

[5] I visited three Pradeshiya Sabhas and one Municipal Council in Ampara District and one Urban Council and one Municipal Council in Nuwara Eliya district.

[6] A more in-depth analysis of the One Text process would produce a variety of useful insights and lessons for students of peace processes, practitioners and donors.

II.   MAJOR FINDINGS

This section presents the major findings of my evaluation. I offer a general assessment of each of the two programs as well as more specific assessments of the sub-components I examined in detail.

A. CONTEXT

In evaluating the performance and impact of the Peace Support and TALG programs, it is important to have an understanding of the context in which the two programs have been implemented. Over the last four years, the situation in Sri Lanka has been characterized by a challenging mix of political volatility, devastation and humanitarian crises, and a faltering peace process. More specifically, the program environment has been directly or indirectly influenced by the following developments:

- The high expectations for the peace process following the signing of the 2002 ceasefire agreement (CFA).

- The subsequent breakdown of formal peace negotiations in mid-2003, when the LTTE suspended its participation.

- The defeat of the UNP government in the April 2004 parliamentary elections and the restoration of an SLFP government (with JVP support) led by Mahinda Rajapakse. (In the November 2005 presidential election, Rajapakse narrowly defeated Ranil Wickremesinghe.)

- The massive damage caused by the December 26, 2004 tsunami and the huge relief and reconstruction effort following the tsunami.

- The inability or unwillingness of the GoSL and LTTE to use the common challenge of tsunami recovery to inject new life into the peace process by increasing trust and cooperation between the two parties.

- Since early 2006, the collapse of the ceasefire all but in name only.

B. THE AED PEACE SUPPORT PROGRAM

USAID -- through both OTI and USAID's support for AED's Peace Support Program -- has supported the peace process since the signing of the CFA and the creation of the government's Peace Secretariat in 2002. In May 2004 USAID awarded a Cooperative Agreement to AED in the amount of $6,948,866 for Phase III of the AED's Peace Support Program. Phase III runs until September 30, 2007 and has supported a range of

activities intended to support the peace process and build larger constituencies for peace.[7] The most important of these are:

- Support for multi-stakeholder dialogue conducted by "One Text" and SAPI,
- Support to bring international negotiators and other conflict resolution experts to Sri Lanka;
- Creation of more than 60 People's Forums across the country;
- Support for the Peace Secretariat for Muslims (PSM); and
- Support for public opinion surveying, production of a teledrama and other media activities.

Approximate levels of AED funding
(grants or sub-contracts; major components only)

- One Text and SAPI $603,600
- Info Share (non pass thru) $338,400
- International Negotiators $183,000
- People's Forums $791,800
- YA TV Teledrama $170,700
- Peace Secretariat for Muslims $ 73,100
- CPA/SI for KAPS II and III $144,900
- CPA for media training $ 40,300
- BCIS conflict resolution course $ 69,500

1. General Observations

In general, the Peace Support Program is innovative, ambitious and comprehensive. It possibly is the first time that USAID has been so deeply involved in an ongoing peace process. It is ambitious in terms of what it was trying to do, namely to support Track I negotiations and build a broader constituency for peace. It is comprehensive in that it was trying to include all the relevant parties in Track 1 ½ negotiations and also channel grass roots views into the peace process.

But it may have been too ambitious and too complex. Taken together, One Text, SAPI and the People's Forums represent a very complicated architecture. While this may have been unavoidable, it appears large amounts of time have been consumed by managing the proliferation of institutions, committees, sub-committees, etc. The creation of SAPI as a stand alone institution, although it may have been necessary, has proven to be particularly problematic.

The multi-stakeholder dialogue that took place under One Text and SAPI was not cheap: If the funding for Info Share and the international negotiators program are included, the total support provided to One Text and SAPI is about $1,125,000. Approximately one

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[7] USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (USAID/CMM) also has provided about $750,000 in funding to the Peace Support Program.

quarter of this amount went to paying the stakeholders and researchers honoraria for their participation.

The implementation of the Peace Support Program has been affected by variable levels of US Embassy support for the program. The program has played out over the tenure of three US Ambassadors. Not surprisingly, each Ambassador has had somewhat different priorities and approaches. As a result, there have been times when the Embassy has not been fully supportive of some of the Peace Support Program's activities.

Many of the program's strengths and weaknesses are attributable to the unique role played by Hannes Siebert. Siebert had a vision and was able to inspire people, bring them together, and secure donor support. But he probably played too large a role, especially as a non-Sri Lankan. Moreover, both AED and the USAID Mission had limited in house expertise in peace building. As a result, Siebert was given wide latitude and was subjected to relatively little peer oversight.

It appears there was less than optimal synergy between the Peace Support Program and OTI's program, which was trying to build support for peace at the grassroots level. There was some collaboration, particularly on the teledramas, media and Info Share. As is the case in most USAID Missions where there is an OTI program, there were the usual challenges of somewhat different programmatic priorities and approaches, as well as an element of territoriality. As a result, in the area where it would seem there would be an opportunity for significant cooperation, supporting the People's Forums, there has been only limited progress.[8] It appears more could have been done by the Mission's management to ensure greater complementarity and synergy between the OTI and DG programs.

Finally, it is important to note that most of AED's partners speak very positively about their relationship with AED, and all of USAID's implementing partners that have interacted with AED have found AED to be very cooperative and helpful.

2. Discussion of Major Program Components

A. One Text and the South Asian Peace Institute

Approximate amount of funding provided by AED: $603,600.[9]

Overview

One Text was an effort to bring together representatives of Sri Lanka's multiple political parties to discuss issues relevant to a negotiated settlement to the conflict. The primary

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[8] It is the author's view that cooperation between and among the OTI, AED and TAF programs, while not poor, could have been better.
[9] Both InfoShare and the international negotiators programs directly supported the One Text process. If the funding for InfoShare and INRE program are included, the total support provided to One Text grows to $1,125,000.

goal was to bring about a multi-party consensus that would, in turn, contribute to the official, Track I process. One Text offered a facilitated process for the parties to build trust, overcome their differences and find common ground (the "one text). The One Text process used both facilitated face-to-face meetings and a secure computer network ("Groove Workspace") for exchanging views, messages and documents among the parties. The One Text process was facilitated by Hannes Siebert, Norbert Ropers, the head of the Berghoff Foundation and Vinya Ariyaratna, the head of Sarvodaya.

According to AED, in August 2003, the main political parties expressed an interest starting up a One Text process and requested support from AED. The One Text process began in late 2003, but because One Text wasn't a legal entity, from May 2004 to May 2205 AED initially supported it by providing pass through funding (about $243,800) to InfoShare, which already was existed. InfoShare also served as the funding conduit for the International Negotiators (INRE) program from July 2004 to December 2005 (receiving a total of $97,300), at which time SAPI assumed responsibility for the INRE program.

In May 2005 the LTTE decided to join One Text. This required that USAID and AED end their support for One Text (thru InfoShare). In order to continue to support non-LTTE multi-party dialogue, AED supported the establishment of the South Asia Peace Institute (SAPI) in May 2005. SAPI initially was supported by $77,200 in pass through funding coursed through InfoShare. In October 2005 SAPI received one year funding totaling $368,300.[10] It was envisioned that SAPI would become the home for a variety of activities supporting the peace process, including organizing the visits of high-level international experts and, in collaboration with NDI, engaging with political parties.[11]

Assessment

There are many aspects of One Text and SAPI that could be discussed at length. Given time and space limitations, this evaluation will comment on three key issues:

1) Given conditions in Sri Lanka, did the One Text process make sense?
2) If so, was the One Text process well designed and implemented?
3) What impact has it had?

Regarding the logic of One Text, there isn't a simple or clear cut answer. Clearly there was and is potential value in multi-stakeholder dialogue – especially when, as was the case in Sri Lanka, most of the political parties have been excluded from the Track I process. Looked at this way, the logic for One Text is compelling and it deserves praise for being bold and innovative.

But the case also can be made that One Text and SAPI's efforts to sustain a "multi-stakeholder" dialogue were fundamentally flawed – or at least doomed to insignificance – given the following:

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[10] SAPI has received a no cost extension so that its funding continues until September 2007.
[11] The connection between SAPI and NDI never developed.

- First, since late 2003 there was little if any meaningful "Track I" for One Text to feed into. According to one knowledgeable observer of the peace process, "Neither the government nor the LTTE were interested in a common text." Moreover, a link between One Text and the Norwegian facilitators was never formalized, further weakening its link to Track 1.

- Second, the nature of participation in One Text was highly problematic. The JVP never joined, and the LTTE's participation produced far more problems than gains. Moreover, among the parties that did participate, the level and caliber of representation was unequal, and in some cases the authority of the representatives to either speak for or wield influence within their parties was doubtful. Clearly, not all the parties were seriously invested in One Text.[12]

- One Text's commitment to consensual decision making became a problem – particularly after the LTTE joined. According to people close to the One Text process, the LTTE representative wasn't interested in making substantive progress; rather he was primarily interested in being treated as a equal party in the process (and being able to monitor it). According to one observer, the LTTE's presence caused "process nightmares."

Second, regarding the design and management of One Text and SAPI, the picture is, at best a mixed one. To be sure, One Text and SAPI represent an effort to develop new processes and institutions. As such, some degree of trial and error is to be both expected and welcomed. However, a number of decisions made regarding the conduct of the process proved to be problematic. These include:

- The creation of too many committees, which became "an administrative disaster."
- As already noted, the reliance on consensual decision making became problematic.
- The payment of honoraria to participants was, at best, costly and at worst, calls into question the commitment and motivation of the recipients.
- The emphasis on using computer-based communication processes (e.g. "Groove" software) proved to be somewhat misguided. It appears many of the participants in One Text were reluctant or unable to use the technology.
- One Text and SAPI never made a concerted effort to utilize the potential connection to "grassroots" views represented by the People's Forums.
- Both One Text and SAPI have suffered from problematic leadership and management. Since its inception, SAPI appears to have been beset by serious management problems: problems with its leadership led to the change in the Director in September 2005; the SAPI Board didn't during the entire 4th

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[12] Paying party representatives significant honoraria to attend One Text meetings contributed to the questions that have been raised about the motivations of some participants.

quarter of 2005; it didn't establish an office until March 2006; and during 2006 it wasn't able to carry out many of its planned activities.

- There appears to have been very little, if any, independent oversight of the management of One Text and SAPI. Those responsible for oversight of the two organizations also were involved in day-to-day management of the organizations and in the One Text process. As a result, it appears there was little accountability, and many organizational issues went unaddressed.

What, then, can be concluded about One Text and SAPI? Given that One Text was/is principally a *process* designed to build trust and encourage dialogue among stakeholders it is very difficult to evaluate how well it was done and its impact – especially given the difficult environment in which it was operating. Moreover, One Text was secretive – perhaps too much so – and wasn't seeking to play a high profile role. As Hannes Siebert has pointed out, it was important for One Text not to claim successes and to let positive outcomes, such as they were, emerge outside of One Text.

In my opinion, One Text was a potentially useful channel for "multi-stakeholder" dialogue. More tangibly, One Text played a role in the creation of the PSM, and I have been told that some of the committee work done on human rights and monitoring the ceasefire agreement was of high quality and useful. But its potential impact was limited by three "structural" problems in Sri Lanka: (1) the absence of a robust Track I process, (2) the top-down nature of decision making in Sri Lanka and 3) shortcomings in the organization and behavior of Sri Lankan political parties. Moreover, whatever its maximum potential, One Text's ability to achieve it appears to have been diminished somewhat by leadership and management problems that emerged or became more pronounced with the creation of SAPI. Nevertheless, the One Text experiment has established a useful precedent for "Track 1 ½" dialogue at the same time that it has taught many lessons about how to do it and how not to do it.

B. InfoShare

Approximate level of funding provided by AED: $338,400.

Overview

InfoShare was established in September 2003, originally was a subsidiary of YA-TV, to serve as an ICT support mechanism for the peace process, and specifically to adopt and operate a system ("Groove Workspace") that allowed for secure communication and interaction among the One Text participants. InfoShare also has developed information sharing and communications platforms such as Sri Lanka Peace Tools, Sri Lanka Peace partners and the Peace Library. Beginning in 2006 InfoShare began making its ICT expertise and assistance available to other CSOs and donors.

AED has supported InfoShare since 2004. OTI also provided about $90,000 in funding so that InfoShare could establish its own server.

Assessment

Given time and space limitations, there are only two points I am capable of making about InfoShare and the technology provided by InfoShare. The first regards the extent to which the Groove Workspace technology actually was used by One Text participants. The Groove technology might have been essential if there had been a serious effort underway in the One Text process to arrive at one or more common texts or agreements. But my impression is that in reality there was relatively little exchanging and negotiating of texts. Moreover, it appears to be the case that some or many of the political party participants in One Text were not able or inclined to use electronic forms of communication. Therefore, it is my impression that the Groove technology was underutilized.

That said, until recently, InfoShare's role was principally one of responding to the ICT needs of the One Text process, as determined by Hannes Siebert and others managing the process.[13] So if the technology adopted for use in the One Text process was in fact underutilized, it does not appear to be the fault of InfoShare.

The second point is that InfoShare seems to have emerged as one of – and perhaps the only – unambiguously successful and sustainable by-products of One Text process. Info Share appears to be developing into a commercially viable ITC service provider for CSO and donors. In addition to establishing an online peace library and several other peace-related websites, InfoShare is helping many civil society organizations to upgrade their ITC capabilities and contributing to more and better networking among organizations.

C. International Negotiators (INRE) Program

Approximate level of funding provided by AED: $183,000

The International Negotiators (INRE) component is premised on the assumption that key actors in the peace process would benefit from the insights and involvement of international experts on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Originally, the Peace Support Program planned to support ten visits, with four to occur in the first year. The idea was that the experts would be carefully selected based on the relevance of their expertise and that each one would visit two or three times to ensure continuity. Originally the visits were going to be implemented by CPA and BCIS. Instead, they were funded first through InfoShare and then transferred to SAPI. CPA and BCIS cooperated in arranging the visitors' programs and BCIS looked to the INRE program to provide the international lecturers for its diploma program.

To date the INRE program has brought several excellent people to Sri Lanka. But it also appears the program got off to a good start and then ground to a halt. There was a flurry of visits during the second half of 2004: Nick Haysom visited in July and November; Ron Krabil, David Petrasek, John Pack and Alan Keenan all visited in July; and Prakash

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[13] According to the Groove Workspace website, Siebert had used Groove Workspace in the Balkans and the Middle East before he adopted it for the One Text process in Sri Lanka.

Karath visited in September. However, after Haysom's November 2004 visit, there were no visits until Mohammed Abu-Nimer visited in August 2005. And after that, with the exception of a two-day visit by Chris Moore in December 2005, there were no further visits until Abu-Nimer returned in March 2006. The only other visit since then has been a one week visit by Yash Ghai in July 2006.

It is my understanding that the low number of visits in 2005 and 2006 is a consequence of SAPI's management problems, but I did not have a chance to explore this. A secondary problem with this component is the challenge of making the visits serve the needs of three organizations -- SAPI, CPA and BCIS -- with differing needs and schedules. As a result, all three have voiced frustration with the program.

D. People's Forums

Approximate level of funding provided by AED: $791,000

Overview

The People's Forums are grassroots citizens groups that come together to promote peace, good governance and democracy. The original idea was that People's Forums would be the source of grassroots input into the One Text process. This linkage never really developed, but the People's Forums have continued to be concerned with local level conflict resolution and peace building.[14]

The People's Forums have been established and facilitated by four NGO "National implementing partners:" the Anti-War Front (AWF), the Foundation for Coexistence (FEC), the National Peace Council (NPC) and Sarvodaya. Initially there were 48 People's Forums. Now, there are more than 60.

The size of People's Forums ranges from about 60 people to over 100. The participants are selected with a view towards representing all segments of the community. With assistance from one of the National Implementing Partners, individual People's Forums form, select their leadership, and develop and implement Action Plans. AED provides (through the implementing partners) each People's Forum with a grant of Rs 500,000 (about $4,800) to support priority activities identified in the Action Plan. As of December 2006, AED funds are being used to support a total of 191 activities. 50% of these are categorized as addressing "co-existence," 17% deal with formal and vocational education, 14% deal with public services, road and agriculture, and 11% deal with "civic responsibility (principally civic awareness campaigns).

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[14] Disagreements over the relationship of the People's Forums to One Text and SAPI delayed the development of the People's Forums. It wasn't until late 2005 that the four NIPs stopped trying to work with One Text and SAPI.

Assessment

The People's Forums did not achieve their original purpose of channeling people's views upwards to One Text and the national peace process. This raises a valid question about the strategic purpose of the People's Forums – especially given that there are only about 60 of them nation-wide.

But the Forums do provide a venue for citizens from different ethnic groups, walks of life, sexes and ages to come together to address issues of concern to the community. As such, they help to fill the huge void in civic participation that apparently exists at the local level in Sri Lanka. The organization of People's Forums appears to energize and empower their members. And many of the People's Forum activities being supported by AED appear to address important local level issues. Finally, the People's Forum project also has gotten four major NGOs to work together—at least a little. This was no mean feat given the rivalries that traditionally have existed among many of the larger Colombo based civil society organizations.[15]

Two key requirements of People's Forums are that they be inclusive and participatory. AED's exhaustive reporting on the composition of People's Forums suggests that they are very inclusive. It is more difficult to tell how truly participatory Forums are, and the author was not able to explore this issue in any depth. But the anecdotal evidence suggests that they are reasonably participatory, at least relative to exiting norms of participation.

The major issues associated with the development and functioning of the People's Forums include the following:

- ***The "architecture" of the program.*** The People's Forum program is implemented by four NGO "National Implementing Partners" (NIPs), which have somewhat differing agendas, capacities, issues and approaches.[16] This has had the benefit of bringing a degree of diversity to the program, but it also has considerably complicated program management. To begin with, it was a long, time-consuming process to get a modicum of agreement among the four NIPs. Even then, they only agreed to a common, 17 point "Framework," but not to common methodologies or to significant collaboration. Second, several of the NIPs have had commitment or capacity issues: AWF and NPC in particular were very slow to get started -- so much so that NPC almost was dropped as an NIP. (Now AWF is very active and NPC is performing better.) Third, it appears some of the NIPs, particularly Sarvodaya and AWF, see People's Forums as an instrument for expanding their institutional and ideological influence. This isn't an entirely bad thing, but it does suggest that these NIPs may be reluctant to allow "their" People's Forums to become too independent.

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[15] It took about nine months to finalize the MOU that got the four NGOs to work together to create the People's Forums.

[16] It needs to be noted that no Tamil or Muslim NGOs were included as implementing partners, although it may be the case that some of the local NGOs that NPC works with are Tamil or Muslim.

- ***The capacity of People's Forums to perform effectively.*** At the local level, judgments regarding the performance of People's Forums probably depend in large part on people's expectations. Organizing a regular series of participatory community discussions may be considered to be a significant accomplishment. Likewise, having a say in how the funding provided by AED is to be spent probably is a novel and satisfying experience for many. For USAID, however, it is necessary to set the bar somewhat higher and judge the performance of People's Forums in terms of functions such as mobilizing citizen participation in governance, increasing or improving citizen advocacy of good governance and/or peace, and improving inter-group relations. In these areas it is relatively easy to have some rudimentary or temporary gains, more difficult to make significant and sustained improvements.

  The author did not have the time to examine the capacity and effectiveness of People's Forums. USAID and AED's view is that it is a mixed picture: some People's Forums are functioning well, some are still developing , and some are still in the early stages of development. It is not possible for me to determine the distribution across these three categories. An examination of People's Forum Action Plans suggests that many of the activities appear worthwhile. But it is less clear if the People's Forums have the capacity to implement their projects well or to sustain them so they're not just "one off" activities. With almost 200 small scale activities, it is very difficult to monitor their quality and evaluate their impact.

- ***The quality and consistency of training and facilitation.*** Given the sizeable challenge involved in making grassroots processes genuinely participatory, the author believes there has been insufficient emphasis on providing the necessary facilitation and training to People's Forums. AED may have expected too much from the NIPs in this regard. In any event, the involvement of four NIPs has meant that there are no common training modules on participatory processes, conflict resolution, advocacy, good governance and anti-corruption, etc. AED is making an effort to address this need.

- ***The unclear role(s) of "People's Forums.***" Finally, there are a number of unresolved questions about the role(s) People's Forums should play. Are they a substitute for local government or partners with it? And for what purpose? How "political" should they be? And should the priority be to make them effective local actors or to forge them into some sort of citizen's movement with provincial or even national significance?

In sum, People's Forums appear to be a useful experiment in local-level civic organization and participation. But it is premature to conclude that People's Forums represent a nascent "grassroots citizens movement" for either peace or democracy. For People's Forum's to reach their potential, they require significantly better facilitation and training. It also is important to ensure that People's Forums (a) have an advocacy

dimension and capacity and don't just conduct community development projects and (b) link to Local Authorities and provincial governments.

E. The Peace Secretariat for Muslims (PSM)

Approximate level of funding provided by AED: $ 73,100

Overview

The Peace Secretariat for Muslims (PSM) was created in December 2004, when an MoU was signed between the Sri Lanka's two largest Muslim political parties, the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the National Unity Alliance (NUA).[17] The PSM's mandate is to:

1) Facilitate the development of common positions on issues considered vital to the Muslim community;

2) Prepare a framework on peace building and constitutional issues that will satisfy the aspirations of all Muslims;

3) Act as a resource center and an advisory forum with respect to the peace process;

4) Develop the capacity of Muslims participating in the peace process.

The PSM is recognized by the GoSL, the LTTE and the donor community as the official peace secretariat for the Muslim community. It has established District Offices in areas with large Muslim populations: Galle, Puttalam, Ampara and Trincomalee and Batticaloa. Each District Office has established "District Peace Assemblies" and "Human Security Monitoring Committees."

The Norwegian government is the largest supporter of the PSM; AED currently is the PSM's only other source of support. AED has funded the creation of PSM "help desks" in tsunami-affected areas and PSM's District offices. AED has played an active role in the development of the PSM. Additionally, on two AED-funded visits to Sri Lanka (in August 2005 and March 18-22, 2006), Dr Mohammed Abu-Nimer has worked with the PSM to improve its outreach, mission, and planning.

Assessment

My direct interaction with the PSM was limited to one meeting with the Executive Director in Colombo and a meeting with two PSM staff members in Ampara (which was

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[17] Historically and currently Muslim politics in Sri Lanka are characterized by extreme fractiousness. While the SLMC and the NUA are the two largest parties, the SLMC has multiple factions, there are several other smaller parties, and some Muslim parties are members of the government coalition while others are (or were) in the opposition.

also attended by Executive Director). Therefore, my observations regarding the PSM are impressionistic, at best.

This said, there appears to be a consensus among donors familiar with the PSM that it suffers from both weak leadership and weak capacity. Some donors also hold the view that the dual party composition of the PSM makes it overly political and insufficiently representative of the entire Muslim community.

I'm not in a position to assess the leadership of the PSM, other to note the inherent challenge facing the leadership of any organization that is composed of two, competing, political parties. As for its capacity, there do seem to be serious capacity issues: after more than two years in existence, it appears to have made only limited progress toward being able to fulfill its ambitious mandate.

The PSM, at least in theory, has the potential to become an important institution. And it deserves credit for making a concerted effort to connect to and reflect the concerns of Muslim communities across Sri Lanka. But it remains to be seen if the PSM can play a meaningful role nationally or at the local level. It faces an uphill struggle given its bipartisan-but-still-narrow composition and its limited capacity, as well as the larger political and geographical divisions among Muslims in Sri Lanka.

F. *The East is Calling* Teledrama.

Approximate level of funding provided by AED: $170,700

During Phase II of the Peace Support Program AED supported the production a 13 part teledrama series by Young Asia TV (YA TV), entitled, *Take This Road.* During Phase III, a second series, entitled *The East is Calling* was produced by YA TV. AED provided YA TV funding in the amount of $170,700.

The two teledramas produced by YA TV were well done: the plots were rooted in real life experiences and they were carefully and sensitively written and produced. *Take This Road* was path breaking, had an audience of 4.1 million and won numerous awards in Sri Lanka. The teledramas also give AED and USAID a good "product" with which to garner support for the Peace Support Program.

But the actual impact of the teledramas – in at least two important ways -- is very difficult to gauge. First, while the teledramas may be "path breaking" in their nuanced treatment of the conflict for a general audience, it is not apparent that they have served as a catalyst for new approaches by the mainstream entertainment industry. I am unaware of any evidence showing that the teledramas have triggered other television programming or movies on the conflict or ethnic relations.

Second, the critical success – or even the popularity – of a television series (or movie) doesn't automatically translate into significant impact on people's attitudes and behavior. Absent supplementary or reinforcing activities, the impact that any television program or

movie can have on public attitudes and behavior is likely to be limited. To date, supplementary activities that use the teledramas to promote tolerance and pluralism have been limited.[18]

In order to gauge the actual impact of the two teledramas, pre- and post-broadcast audience surveys would have to be conducted. Absent these, it must be presumed that the impact of the teledramas was limited.

3. Observations on Other Peace Support Program Activities

Time limitations precluded an in-depth examination of other program activities, even though some of them are fairly significant activities. In this section I offer briefer observations regarding the KAP surveys conducted by CPA/SI and the BCIS diploma program in "conflict resolution skills development." As noted earlier, I did not have an opportunity to examine the CPA media training activities.

- *The Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Surveys (KAPS)*. AED supported the first KAPS during Phase II of the Peace Support Program. During Phase III, two more surveys were supported at a cost of $144,900.[19] The KAPS have provided important new insights into public views of the conflict and the peace process. It appears that the surveying capabilities of Social Indicators have been improved by their experience administering the KAP surveys. This in turn appears to have helped Social Indicators to become a more viable independent survey organization.

- *BCIS diploma program in "Conflict Resolution Skills Development."* The Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies has offered its AED-supported diploma program on Conflict Resolution Skills Development for three years. The goal of the course is to improve participants' ability to play an effective role in resolving conflict-related issues at all levels in Sri Lanka. It would appear to have added value because it brings together personnel from the Sri Lankan armed forces with people from government and non-governmental organizations.

  I did not have time to explore if the BCIS conflict resolution program is significantly different from or better than the several other programs offered in Colombo. But the course appears to a well designed and taught. The curriculum was developed and the course taught in collaboration with the UN University for Peace and includes a mix of theory and practice. It also appears that BCIS has

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[18] YA TV has had plans for a peace education outreach initiative that would use the teledramas. But recently the Ministry of Education decreed it would not permit collaborative efforts with NGOs. To get around this, YATV is currently working with UNESCO to build this initiative into an existing UNESCO program that is currently working with schools throughout the country.

[19] Although two AED-funded surveys were conducted, the release of the second survey was never approved by USAID.

engaged a number of good lecturers and facilitators. However, the in the last year the program has been hurt by SAPI's inability to arrange for the visits of international experts on conflict resolution – BCIS has depended on lectures by visiting experts to enhance the diploma program.

As of February 2007, the course has been offered three times. The total intake is 112 students. Tuition for participants from the Armed Forces and government is heavily subsidized (by as much as 75%). This raises the question of if, absent funding from AED, the program is sustainable. It remains to be seen if there will continue to be adequate demand for the course once the subsidies are reduced.

4. Program Activities that Were Planned but Not Undertaken

The Peace Support Program has had difficulty gaining any traction with one particular sub-component: "Engaging strategic sectors." AED recognizes this and has offered the following explanations:

- Regarding the proposed "inter-religious" program, AED has concluded it is not well-suited to a public tender/small grants approach. AED also concluded that it would be premature to start off with "inter-faith" efforts, and that it made better sense to first look for opportunities to support *intra*-faith peace building initiatives within each of the four major religions. The hope is that once a critical mass of pro-peace activism is established*, inter*-faith initiatives could evolve. Currently AED has two or three activities for which they're about to sign agreements.
- AED had planned a training and small grants program for grassroots peace advocacy, for which it requested funding from USAID/CMM. By the time the funding was made available by CMM, the groups AED had planned to support were no longer available. As a result, in discussions with AED's CTO, this activity was dropped.

5. Bottom line assessment

- **Design:** The attempt at multi-stakeholder dialogue embodied in One Text and SAPI was innovative and ambitious, but perhaps too much so. In establishing the People's Forums, AED could have done better advance program design. Although time may not have permitted, it would have been advisable to begin with a few pilot People's Forums. AED has not developed a significant programmatic focus on engaging women and youth, although both groups are included in Peace Support Program activities, particularly People's Forums.

- **Implementation:** The implementation of key components of the program (esp. SAPI and People's Forums) was hampered by the challenging environment in Sri Lanka, as well as a variety of institutional shortcomings and personality issues. It appears AED was somewhat slow to develop an effective team in Colombo and underestimated the staffing needed to manage the People's Forum component.

- **Output/products:** There is little of a tangible nature to show from One Text and SAPI. But the Peace Support Program has been more successful in other areas, including the creation of People's Forums, Info Share and the PSM, the production of the KAP surveys and teledramas, and the support for the BCIS course.

- **Overall impact:** The impact of One Text is principally as a precedent and as a learning experience. More positively, Info Share is making an ongoing contribution to strengthening the ITC capacity of civil society organizations and the KAP survey has elevated the quality of surveying in Sri Lanka. It is too early to judge the impact of People's Forums and the PSM.

- **Sustainability:** The experience of One Text will inform future efforts at multi-party dialogue. Info Share appears self-sufficient. The KAPS methodology is sustainable. It is unclear if People's Forums or the BCIS program are sustainable.

C. THE TALG PROGRAM

1. Overview

The TALG program was designed and approved before the December 2004 tsunami hit. The original purpose was to reduce conflict and build peace through strengthening democratic local governance and the rule of law. In the wake of the December tsunami, the program was modified to focus more heavily on tsunami-affected Local Authorities (LAs). In September 2005 an amendment was signed to the original Cooperative Agreement increasing both the size and the scope of the program.

The program has two components: 1) strengthening participatory local governance in 35 Local Authorities and 2) supporting legal empowerment and alternative dispute resolution (ADR). In FY 2007 about 89% of funding goes to the local governance component, only 11% goes to the legal empowerment and ADR component.

The September 2005 amendment provides for additional capacity building for LAs to coordinate tsunami recovery programs with an emphasis on citizen participation. The amendment increased the number of LAs from 15 to 35 and increased the budget from $6 million to $9.2 million.

Program activities started in February 2005.[20] The local governance component has been implemented in consultation with the Ministry for Provincial Councils and Local Governments (MPCLG), the Sri Lankan Institute for Local Government (SLILG) and provincial-level Commissioners for Local Government (CLG) and Assistant Commissioners for Local Government (ACLG). The ADR sub-component, which focuses exclusively on improving the quality and scope of the government's Community Mediation Board program, is implemented in close consultation with the Ministry of Justice.

Under the local governance component, several types of non-training assistance have been provided. Grants of up to Rs 1 million (about $10,000) were given to 22 tsunami-affected LAs to enable them to hire and pay the additional personnel needed for recovery and reconstruction work. A number of additional small grants were also made to tsunami affected LAs using funding made available from TAF's "Give2Asia" mechanism. The TALG program also has given each LA two computers, a printer, a UPS and a year of free internet connectivity. Finally, under TALG, six provincial Commissioners of Local Government are receiving grants of Rs 1 to 3 million (totaling Rs 12 million) to establish 12 district level Good Governance Resource Centers (GGRCs).

The 35 Local Authorities assisted under the TALG program represent about 11% of all LAs, but the distribution across types of Local Authorities varies is as follows:

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[20] The first elections for LAs in the Eastern province we held March-April 2006 [check this.]

	Total number	TALG-assisted	TALG/Total
Pradeshiya Sabhas	270	24	9%
Urban Councils	42	7	17%
Municipal Councils	18	4	22%

The total population of the Local Authorities assisted by the TALG program is about 1.8 million people. The largest LA assisted, the Anuradhapura Municipal Council, has a population of 128,000 people; the smallest, the Tangalle Urban Council, has only about 9,000 people.

The legal empowerment component has two sub-components: 1) to empower selected vulnerable groups/communities to address injustice (principally through legal education and empowerment) and 2) strengthening ADR systems -- exclusively the government's Community Mediation Boards program.

Budget for Program Activities

	FY 2006	*FY 2007*
Local Governance Component		
• Models of effective local governance	$1,908,700	$1,537,000
• Sustainability and replication	137,000	471,000
• Political will for reform	317,100	492,000
Rule of Law Component		
• Legal empowerment	473,500	60,000
• Mediation Boards	364,200	250,000
Total:	**$3,200,500**	**$2,810,000**

2. General Observations

With its focus on local governance, the TALG program addresses an aspect of governance in Sri Lanka which has the potential to have tangible, if somewhat limited, impact on many people's lives. Although Local Authorities have limited powers and resources, how they use their power and resources can make a significant difference, not just in terms of the effectiveness of basic service delivery (such as garbage collection, drainage and libraries), but also in terms of how citizens interact with and view their local government. Moreover, the role of LAs in tsunami-affected areas took on added importance in the context of post-tsunami relief and recovery.

The local governance component of the TALG program is a fairly standard local governance strengthening program. It has two worthy but somewhat limited goals: 1) to improve the delivery of the limited number of services for which LAs are responsible and 2) making LA budgeting and planning more participatory. On the one hand, the program

can be commended for being realistic and practical – and having tangible impact. On the other hand, it also must be recognized that the program's success is, to some extent, in the realm of harvesting "low hanging fruit." It hasn't dealt in a major way with the challenges of scaling up or policy reform.

The local governance component of the TALG program appears to have been well designed and capably implemented. The program has done a good job using training to improve the basic skills of Local Authorities. It also appears to have been effective in introducing more participatory approaches to planning and budgeting. It appears to have placed a heavy emphasis on training of local level facilitators for guiding participatory processes, known as "Technology of Participation" or ToP. For example, 150 facilitators were trained on how to use the program's guidebook on participatory planning and budgeting.

The program is supporting the creation of 12 Good Governance Resource Centers (GGRCs), most of which are still in early stages of development. According to TAF, GGRCs are "intended to provide local authority staff and elected members with exposure to sound exemplary local governance practices so that they may adapt and adopt these practices to improve their service delivery, management and good governance efforts." Moreover, "it is hoped that GGRCs will institutionalize reform efforts that have been made in partner local governments and would ultimately have the capacity to conduct basic research, facilitate training for local authority officials, collect and disseminate best practices in participatory governance and local authority service delivery and financial management, host policy dialogues and in general, advocate for and support good governance practices at local authority level.

But the lifespan of the program – about 2 ½ years -- is too short to achieve its full potential. In particular, there is not enough time to make substantial progress in the area of local government policy reform. The relatively short duration of the program also reduces the likelihood that the good practices it has introduced will become institutionalized and widely replicated.

3. Assessment of the Local Governance Component

The local governance component of the TALG program receives the preponderance of the funding and therefore was the principal focus of my evaluation.

Strengths and accomplishments:

- The program is rooted in a solid understanding of the needs of Local Authorities. This understanding was derived from a comprehensive assessment of LA capacities and needs conducted at the outset of the program.

- The program appears to have responded effectively to the needs of LAs. In all six of the LAs I visited, I was consistently told that the training was relevant, well designed and readily applicable to the work being done by LAs. There were

virtually no complaints about the quality or the relevance of the training; the only complaints registered were that it was too short and sometimes not differentiated enough.

- It also appears that LAs have been receptive to the concept of participatory budgeting and planning. All six LAs I visited had either enthusiastically adopted more participatory and consultative approaches or were in the process of doing so. However, the extent of participation probably varies across LAs and probably ranges from limited, "by invitation only" consultations to more fully inclusive and representative approaches.

- A significant effort has been made to disseminate both the concept that LAs have an important role to play as well as "best practices." Efforts at dissemination have included: distribution of a newsletter, study tours, media activities, sponsoring two "Local Governance Leading Practices" Symposia (in July 2006 and 2007), and support for the creation of the 12 GGRCs. There has been some replication outside the circle of program-assisted LAs. According to TAF, over 100 non-TALG LAs around the country have adopted the TALG approach for participatory planning.[21]

- The program works on multiple levels with both governmental and non-governmental entities. Program staff recognize the need to build relationships with the Ministry for Local Government and Provincial Councils (MLGPC) with officials at the provincial level. The program also has engaged district-based NGOs to help link communities with their LAs. It also has engaged the NGO Inpact to facilitate the productive engagement of political parties at the local level.

- TALG is assisting the leadership of the MLGPC to develop its policy reform agenda and will facilitate an all party discussion group on local government policy matters.

- It appears the TAF/ICMA/EML partnership has produced a strong team with complementary skills. Institutionally, TAF has a long presence in and deep knowledge of Sri Lanka. ICMA is very experienced running local governance strengthening programs in developing countries. The local partner, EML Consulting, contributed significant local experience and expertise.

- The program apparently has established a good working relationship with OTI, but this took some time. As with the AED program, the barriers to cooperation have included differing approaches, timing issues, a degree of rivalry, etc. The program also has good relations with other donors working on local government strengthening.

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[21] According to the Additional Secretary at MPCLG, about 150 LAs now are using participatory planning methods.

Shortcomings and problems:

- The two and a half year time frame for the TALG program is unrealistic: It takes time to build relations and credibility (at all three levels of government) and more time is needed for the proper sequencing of efforts to promote policy reform.

- There is an inherent limit on the potential impact of the program because of the absence of influential champions for decentralization and local government reform. The national government has been more concerned with provincial-level politics and government. (Both the MLGPC and the SLILG are, at best, weak proponents of local government reform.) Provincial governments, which have the most responsibility for LAs, tend to be weak and pre-occupied with their own affairs. LAs have yet to become effective advocates for their own empowerment.

- Relatively less emphasis has been placed on trying to build the demand for and/or political will in support of policy reform. Apparently little or nothing was done on this aspect during the first nine months of the program. It wasn't until the second half of 2006 (July-Sept) that agreements were reached with 10 NGOs to work with community groups and the TALG LAs to strengthen LA-community governance linkages. It wasn't until late 2006 that agreements were reached with Inpact and CPA to engage political parties on local governance issues. This slowness is partly due to the limited time available and the difficulty of the challenge involved. But it also appears to be the case that the program staff has been more comfortable working on the technical and participatory elements of the program than on the admittedly more difficult policy and political elements.

- The important role provincial governments play vis-à-vis Local Authorities argues in favor of doing more to ensure that Provincial Council members, LGCs and ALGCs are knowledgeable about the needs of LAs and are advocates for local governance policy reforms. GGRCs operate at the district level.

- In addition to the relatively standardized (and much needed) training offered, the program could also have offered more tailored training, for example in the area of tourism management and promotion. More emphasis could also be placed on strengthening transparency and curbing corruption. Finally, the program could also do more to build the competencies and self-confidence of women in Local Authorities.

- Given the problems of sustainability that typically are associated with "resource centers," it might have been wise to commit to supporting a smaller number of GGRCs.

- It appears the Local Authority Development Scale (LADS) has been used almost exclusively for the purpose of tracking the progress of project-assisted LAs. It would have been revealing to conduct the LADS in some number of non-project assisted LAs.

- Finally, although the program has conducted a number of assessments and surveys (such as the LADS), all but one of these has been limited to the LAs assisted by the program.[22] The absence of one or a series of national surveys is unfortunate for at least two reasons. First, there is no control group against which to compare the progress made in the TALG-assisted LAs. Second, solid survey data could be a useful tool in the effort to stimulate policy reform.

4. Assessment of the Legal Empowerment Component

The Rule of Law component of the TALG program accounts for about 10% of the total program budget. The Asia Foundation (TAF) works in this area with both USAID and British funding. During my visit to Sri Lanka, I had time to meet with only a few of TAF's partners: the Ministry of Justice, the Centre for Mediation and Mediation Training (CMMT), the Vehilihini Development Centre, and Lawyers for Human Rights and Development. So my findings are, at best, very impressionistic. I am not in the position to comment on the capacity of other partners like Sarvodaya Legal Services Movement, Woman in Need, Alternative Dispute Resolution Institute or the Legal Aid Commission.

Legal empowerment

TAF has supported the activities of legal aid and education NGOs in Sri Lanka for more than a decade. Under the TALG program, the focus is on enabling vulnerable communities and groups to assert their rights. The communities targeted under the program include: women-headed households, Muslim IDPs, Tamil plantation workers, tsunami-affected communities, women victims of violence and home-based workers. .

According to TAF, the legal empowerment component seeks to facilitate legal empowerment within marginalized and vulnerable communities by:

- Strengthening human rights education and access to legal rights education;
- Promoting para-legalism;
- Creating networks for community dispute resolution;
- Strengthening community capacity for advocacy.

The approach involves:

1) First, raising awareness in targeted communities;
2) Then mobilizing communities for action through community organizing and networking; and
3) Empowering groups/communities to addressing threats to their rights by strengthening community-based dispute resolution processes through paralegal formation, legal assistance, mediation and advocacy.

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[22] At the outset of the program, TAF-ICMA arranged to have a few questions about local government services and interaction with local authorities included in a Social Indicators nationwide survey. But this yielded only limited and sketchy information.

Some of the accomplishments to date include:

- Post tsunami, the Legal Aid Commission (LAC) assisted with the search for and replacement of people's key documents. The LAC also pioneered a campaign for legal reform which resulted in the enacting of the Tsunami Special Provisions Law. The LAC also played a role in the creation of 13 Special Mediation Boards aimed at addressing disputes arising in tsunami-affected areas.

- In Oct 2005 WIN obtained the first ever Protection Order for a victim of domestic violence. The effort to address domestic violence has been strengthened with TAF's support for the National Centre for Victims of Crime (NCVC), which provides para legal training to police officers.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (Community Mediation Boards)

TAF has a long and close relationship with the Ministry of Justice and the Community Mediation Board program, going back to support for development of the Mediation Boards Act before 1989.[23] Chris Moore's training of trainers is considered to be "gospel" among Mediation Board trainers and over the years, TAF has supported other ToTs for the Mediation Boards. Under the TALG program TAF has: (a) provided support to CMMT to train 7 Tamil speaking mediator trainers, (b) supported the expansion of Mediation Boards into Jaffna, and (c) provided support for NPC to sensitize mediators re diversity, gender, etc.

TAF support is not essential for the continuation of the Mediation Boards program, but it has played an important role in improving/maintaining the quality of the program and expanding its scope. Unfortunately, there has been relatively limited study of the overall impact of the Mediation Boards program. Using other funding, TAF hopes to do an external evaluation of the program.

5. Bottom Line Assessment

The following observations apply principally to the local governance component of the TALG program.

- **Design:** The design of the program placed an appropriate emphasis on both practical training for LAs and participatory processes. It also provided for small grants to LAs. But the relatively short life of the program does not provide enough time to ensure either the institutionalization of best practices or significant progress with policy reform.

- **Implementation:** Overall, the program appears to have been smoothly implemented by a capable team. However, the sub-component concerned with

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[23] The first pilot Mediation Boards were set up in 1990. The first "official" Mediation Board was established in Moratuwa in 1991.

political will and policy reform got off to a slow start and now has limited time to achieve any significant outcomes. It appears more effort could have been made to explore linkages with AED People's Forums.

- **Output/products:** The training provided to LAs has been highly valued, and it appears it is being used to good effect. There has been some replication/ dissemination of good practices, especially participatory budgeting and planning. But few outputs to date with regard to building political will.

- **Overall impact:** The overall impact includes improved performance of 35 LAs, more citizen participation in those and other LAs, and the apparent invigoration of some provincial and national officials responsible for local government affairs. However, the full potential impact of the program will not be achieved because of its relatively short life.

- **Sustainability:** Absent a Sri Lankan institution with the capacity and resources to continue the program's activities, the prospects for sustaining the program's successes are poor. Some or many of the basic concepts and techniques may "stick" for awhile, but unless they are reinforced, they will wane over time. The probability is low that the LADS and most GGRCs are sustainable. It is unclear if the nascent momentum for further local government reforms will continue.

- **Cost effectiveness:** I do not have adequate information to make any judgments regarding the cost effectiveness of the TALG program.

III. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SOME LESSONS FOR USAID

- The experience of the Peace Support Program highlights the importance of making sure that the Embassy is fully engaged in and supportive of USAID programs that address the conflict or other politically sensitive issues.

- Greater efforts need to be made to ensure that DG and OTI programs are made more complementary and mutually reinforcing. While there are a number of factors that make greater complementarity difficult to achieve, it also is the case that cross-program complementarity and synergy rarely are among the highest priorities of USAID offices and their implementing partners. For there to be greater complementarity, it has to be made a higher priority not just by Mission management, but also by the leadership of USAID's implementing partners <u>and</u> by their staff in the field.

- Two and a half years – the approximate life of the TALG program -- is too short a period of time to do significant, lasting institution building and policy reform. Such a short period of time almost guarantees that the successes of a program will be limited and unsustainable. It also runs the risk of generating disappointment and cynicism among the programs beneficiaries.

- It is advisable to avoid creating new, non-organic organizations (such as SAPI). If, as it appears to be the case with SAPI, there was no alternative to creating a new organization, then it is essential to ensure that it has top-flight leadership and adequate oversight of management.

- Good training and facilitation are critical for conveying new approaches to governance, politics and conflict mitigation – especially at the grassroots level. But in Sri Lanka, there is a dearth of competent trainers and facilitators. So if the Mission is serious about supporting grassroots participation, USAID and its partners must be prepared to invest the time and money to produce good trainers and facilitators.

- The largely unsuccessful effort to use "Groove" software and computers as a major "connector" in the One Text process is a useful reminder of the importance of making sure that technology is appropriate for the intended users.

- The near total absence of local-level media remains a serious hindrance both to transparent and accountable governance and conflict mitigation at the local level.

- USAID and its partners still have not found a satisfactory set of indicators and other measures to *usefully* track *processes* such as peace processes, legal empowerment, etc. At a minimum, the voluminous quantitative data that is assembled by the AED program should be supplemented with more qualitative

analysis. For example, it would have been informative if the Quarterly Reports included a short narrative that linked developments in the peace process with program activities.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FUTURE PROGRAMS

1. Supporting Participatory Local Governance

- *Build on what works*. In the past I have been skeptical about the value of doing local governance strengthening in Sri Lanka, given that LAs have quite limited authorities and resources. But the TALG program has demonstrated that training and other forms of assistance to LAs can make a difference and that there appears to be a willingness on the part of many LAs to making local government processes more participatory. (But it is too early to tell if the LAs are becoming significantly more transparent and accountable.) Given the success of the TALG program and the more mixed record of other programs, I encourage the Mission to maintain a programmatic focus on making local government more effective and participatory.

- *But be mindful of the government's motives.* The Mission and its partners need to monitor and assess the government's motivations regarding local governance. In particular, it needs to proceed with care if it becomes clear that strengthening LAs is being used principally to strengthen the ruling party or as an alternative to provincial government.

- *Don't ignore the provincial level.* The Mission and its partners should respond cautiously to requests to provide significant support to the SLILG. Any prospective support should be conditional upon a revamping of the organization's mandate and management structure. Support could more usefully be provided at the provincial level to improve the local governance knowledge base of Provincial Council members, CLGs and ACLGs.

- *Enhancing the impact of People's Forums*. It is not clear to me that the People's Forums, on their own, have the potential to become a grassroots "people's movement" in support of peace, democracy and development. But even if this doesn't happen, they represent a somewhat useful experiment in localized civic action. Whatever their potential, the People's Forums need significantly better training and facilitation for them to develop into effective civic bodies (or a movement). And if the People's Forums are going to contribute in a meaningful way to any of the Mission's larger objectives, they must: (a) include an explicit advocacy dimension and not just concern themselves with community-level peace and development projects, and (b) link to Local Authorities and provincial governments. I would be more inclined to support efforts to get People's Forums to engage local and provincial governments than to network among themselves. Or put differently, if support is given to People's Forums to network among

themselves, a principal reason for networking should be to more effectively engage government (and perhaps political parties as well).

2. **Supporting Peace and/or Conflict Mitigation**

- *Future priorities*. For the foreseeable future, until there is a renewed commitment to a Track I peace process, the Mission's focus should be on: (a) addressing some of the most pernicious by-products of renewed conflict, namely increased inter-group tensions and human rights violations; (b) preserving informed and pluralistic debate regarding solutions to the conflict, and (c) increasing public understanding of models of federalism and devolution.

- ***Involving Local Authorities***. If, as recommended, the Mission continues to support the strengthening of selected Local Authorities, these LAs should also receive training on conflict resolution and human rights. The Mission should also explore how LAs, People's Forums and other groups can work together to create early conflict warning systems.

- ***Broadening support to the Muslim community.*** If the goal of the Mission is to support Muslim unity and involvement in the peace process, then the Mission shouldn't limit its effort to supporting the relatively weak PSM. Instead, the Mission should broaden its approach and look for other Muslim groups and organizations to work with. These might include Muslim business leaders, academics and students. The Mission could also explore linking the PSM with savvy Muslim leaders and organizations in other Muslim minority countries. USAID should ensure there are frequent consultations among donors to ensure that aid to the Muslim community is coordinated and complementary.

- ***The future of One Text.*** Apparently the donors who have supported One Text in the past are in the process of deciding if One Text or a One Text-like process should be continued. There should be donor consensus on this issue and the Mission, given its past involvement with One Text and SAPI, should play a constructive role in arriving at this consensus.

3. **General/Concluding Recommendations**

- The near absence and weakness of media at the local level is a significant challenge to strengthening local governance, protecting human rights, and containing the spread of conflict. The Mission should ensure that there is a media component to any new DG programs.

- Finally, I believe the Mission has a responsibility to make a good faith effort to explore ways that it can increase the likelihood that its most successful programs and partners aren't left completely in the lurch when current funding is exhausted.

1. **December 2006 (focusing on the Peace Support Program)**

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Mike DeSisti, USAID/OTI
Lee Briggs, USAID/OTI
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Upali Amarasinghe, AED
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Tino Brice Clark, AED
Mel Brehaut AED
Janaka Ranatunga, One Text Initiative
Ravi Jayawardana, South Asia Peace Institute
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M.H.M. Salman, Peace Secretariat for Muslims
Thusitha Tennakoon, BCIS
Hilmy Ahamed, YA-TV
Sharmini Boyle, YA-TV
Jehan Perera, NPC
Naomi Berman, NPC
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M.M. Baheej, Foundation for Co-Existence
Father Anura Perara, Anti-War Front
Pradeep Peiris, Centre for Policy Alternatives/Social Indicators
Dr. P Saravanamuttu, Centre for Policy Alternatives
James Oliver, NDI
David Smith, ARD
Nilan Fernando, Asia Foundation
Alix Yule, Asia Foundation
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Phone interviews:
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2. January 2007 (focusing on the TALG Program)

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Liz Hume, USAID/CMM
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Tyrol Ferdinands, Inpact
Indika Perera, Inpact
M.A.N.S. Gunawardena, CMMT
K.P. Deamatagoda, CMMT
T. Yasapala, CMMT
Jan Bruinsma, GTZ
Fahmy Ismail, UN-Habitat/UNDP
Wayne Brook, FCM
Mohamad Abu-Nimer, American University
Staff of PSM Ampara District Office

Local Authorities visited:
Akkaraipattu PS
Alaaiadivembu PS
Karative PS
Kalmunai MC
Nuwara Eliya MC
Lindula Thalawkele UC

ATTACHMENT - USAID/SRI LANKA Commentary, June 6, 2007.

The Mission reviewed the Evaluation Report on the Academy for Educational Development's Sri Lanka Peace Support Project (PSP III) and the Asia Foundation's Transparent and Accountable Local Governance Project (TALG) and provides the following additional contextual information as well as making critique of it.

In December 2006 an evaluation of the Mission's two primary democracy and governance programs was conducted. The Academy for Educational Development's Peace Support Project and the Asia Foundation and International City and County Managers Association's Transparent and Accountable Local Governance Program. Both programs were part of the Mission's strategy that was approved in 2003 and designed to support Sri Lanka's transition from conflict to peace. The democracy and governance portfolio was complimented by the small grant program implemented by USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives. The Mission's view is that significant collaboration took place whenever such synergies were in the best interests of both programs. In addition to the programs that were the subject of this evaluation, the Mission, with tsunami supplemental funding supports ARD Inc, Sri Lanka Anti Corruption Program **(for further information see www.ard-acp.com)** and the national Democratic Institute for International Affairs' Reconciliation Program. Finally, the Mission supported the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) to assist the Department of Elections to computerize the national voter register.

1. **The Academy for Educational Development's Peace Support Project III.**

The PSP is the third phase in the Academy for Educational Development's program to support conflict resolution in Sri Lanka. The initial program began in mid 2002 following a request from the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) to assist their Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP). Originally designed as a technical assistance program for this key institution, the program, through PSP II, expanded its assistance to include the activities in the current program that formed the subject of this evaluation.

The evaluation report does highlight the "necessarily impressionistic" nature of many of the finding based on the limited time available given the nature of some activities. For example, it would be an inordinately time consuming process to evaluate each and every peoples form and interview several thousand participants. Nevertheless, the diversity and challenges of many activities are difficult to accurately capture in a broad brush evaluation such as this.

It is important to note that the PSP III sought to implement an integrated, multi-track program to support peace building in Sri Lanka. The institutional insularity of organizations at all three tracks of the peace process posed a significant challenge and the integrated model of program design; a multi-track and multi stakeholder strategy for peace building was of primary importance to USAID. Any evaluation of existing peace support programs must take note of this. The design of indicators was based on an integrated model that measures linkages established between the tracks of the peace process and the numbers, frequency and nature of stakeholders engaged with the project.

Secondly, the issue of manageable interest is of some importance: the PSP support of track 1 ½ activities, was always intended to support the development of a "southern consensus" by establishing a dialogue between stakeholders from the democratic mainstream as a tool to promote a multi-partisan approach to resolving the conflict. The program goal was to support the formal track one process or, in moments of crisis, when the process was stagnating, to develop strategies that would assist track one actors to re-start the process. A program of this nature will always pit the Mission's manageable interest against the need to continue with support to an increasingly weakened peace process. Engaging in the support of track one processes through activities such as One Text have proved attractive to a number of bilateral donors who have chosen to continue to support this program. The stakeholders who continue to engage in One Text have with the assistance completed an evaluation of the program by specialists in conflict resolution programming.

The People's Forum Initiative was created as a source of grassroots input into the One Text Process but the fora, at the community level are a foundation for what may be grandly termed a movement for peace, good governance, and broader social change. Recently, an implementing partner has suggested the creation of a broader membership based organization based on this initiative. While this is a long term objective, it serves to highlight the potential for the activity. Considerable investment has been made in the Peoples Forum Initiative and it is important not to underestimate the effort required to coordinate a program among four important indigenous civil society organizations, in country where traditionally, the joint implementation of programs has been an infrequent occurrence. The start up phase of this program was lengthy and negotiating the memorandum of understanding between the partners took nine months.

The support for the Peace Secretariat for Muslims is a significant element in the PSPIII. The Secretariat was created as a result of an agreement between Minister Ferial Ashraff, leader of the National Unity Alliance (NUA) and Minister Rauf Hakeem, leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) the two largest Muslim political parties in Sri Lanka and currently members of the governing coalition.

The Muslim political leadership is fractured, a process that began after the death of M.H.M. Ashraff the founder and first leader of the SLMC. Many Parliamentarians who belonged to the party left to form their own political parties and the total number of parties exceeds ten. The secretariat is an attempt to stem this tide and while progress is slow, there is an important need to provide the Muslim community in conflict affected areas a vehicle through which their needs and grievances are aired at a national level. Their district offices have implemented human security committees and district based peace assemblies to engage a broader cross section of community leaders. However, one significant weakness remains, the secretariat must develop a strategy to promote a dialogue between civil society and the community's political leaders and begin a process of dialogue between all Muslim political parties.

The Mission wishes to recognize Info-Share has been a significant success. Since its inception, Info Share has supported a number of civil society organizations, donors and international non-governmental organizations with technical assistance and ICT support. Most recently, Info-Share has worked with the Sri Lanka Anti Corruption Program and the Mission's Economic Growth team is possible private –public alliances to support Info Share in their program areas.

Two important deliverables under the PSPIII were two series of teledramas: the first titled the "Take this Road" and the second titled "The East is Calling" aimed to promote in viewers increased mutual understanding about the human costs of the conflict for all three communities in Sri Lanka and in that regard were considered to be extremely successful.

2. **The Asia Foundation's Transparent and Accountable Local Governance Program (TALG)**

The Transparent and Accountable Local Governance Program was designed as part of a Mission strategy that sought to support the nascent peace process in Sri Lanka. Although the program can be viewed as a "stand alone" program to strengthen the capacity of local government, USAID viewed this program as something beyond the simple effectiveness of service delivery. In the context of a peace process with constitutional reforms and the associated restructuring of government institutions, the TALG program was to be a strategy to generate a positive impression of decentralized government in conflict strategic areas.

This broader goal has been weakened by the resumption in the conflict and program implementation was significantly affected by the tsunami which affected the selection of local government partners. With limited prospects for peace, USAID believes that local government has a role to play in conflict response programming.

Effective service delivery and improved management may be interventions that enable implementers to engage with local government partners but the goal of this assistance is for local authorities to identify a role for them to respond to communities affected by conflict.

In this sense local government programs are one of many programmatic tools to assist in mitigating the adverse impact of Sri Lanka's on-going conflict on local communities. In the current country context, the Mission believes that the opportunities to implement the component to build political will for policy reform was impractical. While the timeframe for the project did not lend itself to the implementation of a policy reform strategy, the events in country, such as the tsunami, and the deteriorating security environment made this component increasingly unrealistic.